

Statement in condemnation of Russia’s sham “referenda” in the Ukrainian provinces of Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia

23 September 2022

On 20 September 2022, Moscow-backed separatists in Ukraine called for the organisation of sham ‘referenda’ in the Ukrainian oblasts of Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia between September 23 - 27.

These sham ‘referenda’ cannot be considered legal in any possible way. The organisation of these referenda not only violates Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity, but also international law. The hasty manner in which they have been called makes a mockery of internationally recognised standards and best practices for fair elections.

While the results of such a farce cannot be taken seriously nor into account, the EU, its Member States, the United States of America and the international community must take this clear attempt to artificially create conditions for Russia to pretend as if Ukraine and any parties backing it, would be fighting against Russia over Russian territory, very seriously.

We call on the European Union, European Union Member States, the United States of America and the international community to:

- condemn promptly, in the strongest possible terms, the organisation of these planned sham ‘referenda’ and to leave no room for uncertainty as to the fact that these territories remain recognised as Ukrainian territories;
- include the individuals involved in the initiation and organisation of these sham ‘referenda’ on international sanctions lists;
- expand the sanctions list from its current composition of only a few hundred senior Russian figures to include all six thousand significant persons on Navalny's list;
- boldly resist Russia's terrorist blackmail;
- become more united than ever in support of Ukraine and massively scale up financial, military and humanitarian aid;
- seize the assets of Putin’s sanctioned circle and use these resources to help Ukraine win the war against Russian aggression.

The Members of the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum